

**Rep. Warren Davidson**  
**Written Testimony for Member Panel**  
**House Committee on Education and the Workforce**  
**“School Choice: Expanding Educational Freedom for All”**  
**Tuesday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

- Thank you, Chairman Bean - and the rest of this committee - for hosting me on this member panel today to talk about empowering parents and expanding school choice. I'm pleased the committee has decided to tackle this issue so early in the 118th Congress, and it was great to be able to support H.R. 5, the Parents Bill of Rights Act, as it passed the House recently.
- What is the proper federal role for education policy? I think we can all agree that the status quo does not fit our various descriptions.
- While I like Thomas Massie's one sentence bill, the reality is we need to unwind years of policies that have made schools dependent on federal dollars at the expense of autonomy – local decision making aligned with the views and values of the community.
- The surest remedy to accountability is to fund students (via parents) rather than schools.
- Courts have found that parents have vast authority when it comes to deciding how to raise and educate their children. And it's exciting to see, under Republican leadership in the House, that Congress is finally discussing policy that reflects this reality.
- Parents have the right to determine their child's future - and it's up to us to ensure they have the tools they need to make informed decisions that align with their values and beliefs.
- This starts by removing unelected and unaccountable Washington bureaucrats from the classroom. Unfortunately, millions in taxpayer dollars currently prop up failing school systems that generate abysmal student outcomes year after year. Not to mention, they sideline parents throughout the entire process.

- A couple of weeks ago, I offered an amendment to H.R. 5 that, if adopted, would have required local school districts that receive federal funding to hold an open enrollment period - for children both inside and outside the district. It left details about how many and what criteria to the schools – so long as they were not discriminatory.
- This proposal would have given parents the opportunity to pick the highest quality education for their child, no matter what their zip code is.
- In 2023, roughly 80,000 students took advantage of open enrollment in my home state of Ohio. Participation has steadily increased over time and it's thanks to the abundance of school choice options leaders in my state have worked tirelessly to provide for parents.
- One of the most popular programs, EdChoice, provides K-12 scholarships to students who are assigned to underperforming schools, as well as to students whose families meet certain income designations.
- Ohio has continued to expand eligibility for their school choice programs, in part because the results have been tremendous. Despite outcries from Democrats and teachers' unions, these programs have empowered parents with options and created competition among schools.
- Every student is different, and programs such as EdChoice have encouraged schools to carefully tend to the needs of parents and their children - who if dissatisfied, can vote with their feet and go to a more fitting school for them.
- According to a 2022 study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, who has offices in Ohio, the academic achievement of district students was "significantly higher" than it would have been had districts not been exposed to the EdChoice program.
- Ohio families are not the only ones reaping the positive results of school choice programs. There has been an explosion of school choice legislation introduced in states all around the country.

- One of the many ways Congress could phase out the Department of Education is to simply consolidate the federal funding we appropriate to the Department into a block grant, which can be awarded to individual States based on citizens in each state.
- Congress uses block grants in Washington for a variety of programs, in no small part because we want taxpayer dollars to be spent in the best way possible. However, the block grants would have to come with no strings attached.
- For decades, presidential administrations have used the Department of Education to implement “one-size-fits-all” policies. They failed time and time again by funding schools that have clear track records of bad student outcomes.
- If we change the status quo and block grant our federal education spending, states like Ohio would have the flexibility to spend taxpayer dollars in ways that impact their students the most, such as expanding their school choice programs.
- Of course, approaches around the country could and would vary, but that is how our Constitution is supposed to work. It’s only a republic if we keep it and education policy is only one example of how we have far more government than will fit within our Constitution.
- It’s time for our federal government (all of us) to recognize this. I look forward to working with Chairwoman Foxx and the rest of my colleagues on this committee to spend taxpayer dollars in a way restores a government small enough to fit within the Constitution. We can afford that government – financially and morally.
- Thank you, Chairman Bean!